

## OBJECT STRIPPING IN SOME OCEANIC LANGUAGES

Kenneth L. Miner

University of Kansas

0.0 Introduction. Since early in the nineteenth century a phenomenon commonly referred to as noun incorporation has been observed and discussed especially by Amerindianists. Seen as a process, what happens is that a nominal (most often, but not necessarily, the direct object of the verb) comes to be part of the verb constituent, forming a compound with the verb root. Incorporated objects typically are unmodifiable and do not refer. A by now hackneyed example is the following from Onondaga (Woodbury 1975b), in which a noun meaning 'tobacco' (minus some phonological material) is inserted between bound morphemes of the verb 'buy':

waʔhahninú? ne? oyéʔkwaʔ

'he bought the tobacco'

waʔhayεʔkwahní:nuʔ

'he bought tobacco; he tobacco-bought'

The phenomenon is quite marginal in English; fairly clear examples are afforded by 'babysit', 'windowshop', 'browbeat' etc. and in the much more productive pattern 'go O-V-ing': 'go foxhunting', 'go girl-watching' and so on. (Interestingly, Marchand 1969 claims that all of these are back-formations from agentives in -er; see also Selkirk 1982:16, 17 who accepts this.)

Noun incorporation is found in a number of Amerindian languages and groupings, as well as in Chukchee (Comrie 1981:250-1 and references given there) and apparently in South Munda (Zide 1976). Mardirussian 1975 extends the notion to several other languages, including Tongan, Fijian and Turkish, which brings me to the point of this paper.

It appears that several languages, most of them Oceanic, exhibit something which does bear a striking resemblance to noun incorporation, but which, I believe, should not be identified with it too hastily. It is this phenomenon that I call "object stripping". I will exhibit it using primarily Ulithian (Micronesian) data, then contrast object stripping with what appears to be true incorporation in the case of Tongan. Several other languages will be mentioned, entailing disagreement with Mardirussian 1975, who regards, for example, Fijian and Turkish as incorporating.

In passing it may be well to point out that even true noun incorporation is often a matter of degree (as in English). In some languages, such as the Northern Iroquoian ones (see Woodbury 1975a, b), incorporation seems to be fully productive. In others, such as the modern Algonquian languages (Wolfart 1971), it is only partially productive in the sense that not all nominals are incorporable and not all verb themes occur without their incorporated nominals (medials); yet new incorporations can still be found. In still other languages, such as modern Muskogean, incorporable object nominals constitute a semantically defined set (Booker 1981).

1.0 Object Stripping. In Miner 1981 and 1982 I observed, as have Woodbury (1975 a, b) and Mardirussian (1975), that "incorporated elements tend to undergo phonological, morphological and/or semantic reduction". In particular they normally are indefinite (do not pluralize, take Adj, Det, etc.) and do not refer. In object stripping, object nominals take on similar properties, but without actually becoming part of the verb.

I will begin by looking at part of the Ulithian nominal system; this particular language not having so far been discussed in this or other theoretical connections, I am able to offer some fresh data.

1.1 Ulithian. The Ulithian NP ordinarily permits inclusion of a number of what Sohn & Bender (1973:323) call "definiteness elements". These are:

- (i) demonstratives, e.g.,  
yilaa 'that'; melwee 'that (unseen)':  
 (1) melwee böödu-li xiti  
 'that nose-his octopus; that octopus beak'  
 (2) yilaa ye feefele  
 'that PRON older-woman'
- (ii) demonstrative enclitics (used independently and as second elements of demonstratives proper, as in (i), e.g.,  
wee 'this (past, non-visible, singular, etc.)'  
kalaay 'that (future, visible, etc.)'  
 (3) përaase mada wee  
 'rice cooked DmCl; the cooked rice'  
 (4) yeliwici kalaay  
 'children DmCl; the children over there'

- (iii) possessive classifiers, e.g., lema- 'drinkable or smokeable object'; waa- 'vehicle'; yima- 'shelter':
- (5) lema-yi cale  
'PosCl-my water; my water to drink'
- (6) waa-yire raata  
'PosCl-their bicycle'
- (7) yima-la sukuun  
'PosCl-his school'
- (iv) numerative classifiers, e.g., -male 'animate'; -yaye 'long, slender object'; -womu 'bundle':
- (8) se-male yixi  
'one-NuCl fish; a fish'
- (9) ruwé-yaye piskaa kaa  
'two-NuCl spear DemCl; two of these spears'
- (10) feda-womu wucu?  
'how-many+NuCl banana; how many bundles of bananas?'
- (v) numerative compounds, e.g.,
- (11) xa-feda-bogo-li wiik yixalaa?  
'ordinal+how-many+NuCl:night+his week today; what day of the week is it?'
- (vi) pronouns (in appositive constructions similar to English "we men":
- (12) yiiir senseye kalaa  
'they teacher DemCl:plural; those teachers'
- (13) yiiy babyoro wee  
'it book DemCl; the book'

These six categories are assigned, in Sohn & Bender's grammar, the feature <+def>, for, as the authors point out (1973:337), "in general the class of transitive verbs occur only with the NP which contains a <+def> element".

However, there is a type of transitive verb which takes as object only NPs which lack any element marked <+def>. These verbs Sohn & Bender (1973:323-4) call "pseudo-intransitive":

- (14) balle sukuun  
'inspect school; to inspect schools'  
\*balle sukuun kalaa
- (15) kuku yaramata  
'bite person'  
\*kuku yaramata lee

- (16) yule luu  
 'drink coconut'  
 \*yule se-wo luu  
 \*yule luu lee

To obtain such meanings as 'inspect those schools', 'bite this person', 'drink a (one) coconut', 'drink this coconut', etc. which correspond to the starred material in (14)-(16), use is made of special transitive verbs which are either suppletive to or derived by non-transparent morphology from the corresponding pseudo-intransitives (1973:325, 327). These derived or suppletive transitive verbs can then be used (like other transitive verbs) only with object NPs which contain <+def>. With (14)-(16) above compare (14a)-(16a)(NB: -ya is an object suffix which is obligatory for a few verbs, optional in most, but which is usually not used if the verb is pseudo-intransitive):

- (14a) balesi(-ya) sukuun kalaa  
 'inspect those schools'  
 \*balesi(-ya) sukuun
- (15a) xusu-ya yaramata lee  
 'bite this person'  
 \*xusu-ya yaramata
- (16a) yulemi(-ya) se-wo luu  
 'drink a coconut'  
yulemi(-ya) luu lee  
 'drink this coconut'  
 \*yulemi(-ya) luu

In some cases the transitive verb corresponding to a given pseudo-intransitive is identical to the latter except in obligatorily taking the object suffix -ya:

- (17) pakki paabiya  
 'shoot pigs'  
 \*pakki paabiya wee  
pakki-ya paabiya wee  
 'shoot the pigs'  
 \*pakki-ya paabiya

Sohn & Bender (1973:327) give eight examples of transitive verbs derived from pseudo-intransitives. All add a suffix:

<u>-li</u>	(2x)
<u>-gu</u>	(2x)
<u>-xu</u>	(1x)
<u>-si</u>	(1x)
<u>-fi</u>	(1x)
<u>-mi</u>	(1x)

Several of these suffixes are used in deriving other transitive verbs from ordinary intransitives (which take no object NP at all); see the extended discussion in Sohn & Bender (1973:328-331). However, although the authors do not seem to be aware of it, it is not clear that the derivation always proceeds in the same direction (transitive from intransitive), since some pseudo-intransitives appear to be derived from transitives by reduplication (1973:327-8):

TRANSITIVE	PSEUDO-INTRANSITIVE	
<u>feledi</u>	<u>felefele</u>	'wave flags'
<u>fici-</u>	<u>ficifici</u>	'knock'
<u>rogo-</u>	<u>rogogo</u>	'hear'
<u>wedi-</u>	<u>wedwedi</u>	'wait'

(The hyphen indicates that the verb requires the object suffix -ya.)

Sohn & Bender give one example in which both a pseudo-intransitive verb and its transitivized counterpart co-occur with a <-def> object NP:

<u>fade përaase</u>	'plant rice'
<u>fadexu-ya përaase</u>	'plant the rice'

According to their informants, the first has "a partitive sense," while the second "implies that the action of the verb is directed to the whole substance of the NP".

The resemblance of stripped objects, or object nominals that lack all marking for definiteness and do not refer, such as are found in Ulithian with pseudo-intransitive verbs, to incorporated object nominals in incorporating languages is considerable. However, although, e.g., fade përaase displays a close bond between verb and object, stripped objects are not phonologically incorporated. Word boundary in Ulithian is manifested by a slight pause or by a lengthening of the preceding vowel (Sohn & Bender 1973:37).

**1.2 Tongan.** Tongan, a Polynesian language, has appeared often in the literature, usually in discussions of ergativity. According to Mardirussian 1975 Tongan is incorporating. Indeed, if Churchward 1953 is to be credited, Tongan is in fact incorporating, although the incorporated element is not moved between bound morphemes. A comparison of Tongan with Ulithian in this respect is quite revealing.

Tongan NPs may contain one of several articles (traditionally so termed) preceding the head noun. Two of these are (h)e (definite) and ha (indefinite):

- (18) e faiako 'the teacher'  
a tohi 'a letter'  
ha 'ū tohi 'some letters'  
 ART Pl(Inan) letter  
ha tohi 'e nima 'five letters'  
 ART letter ATTR five

There is also a set of plural signs, which act somewhat like classifiers, one of which is 'ū in example (18) above. Others are fanga and kau:

- (19) ha fanga pulu 'some cows'  
 ART Pl(animals, children,  
 etc.) cow  
e kau faifekau 'the ministers'  
 ART Pl(adult humans) minister

NPs in Tongan can also be definitized by the use of possessive pronouns, demonstratives, and numeral words.

Definite constructions, according to Churchward (1953: 25-27, 268-289), tend to defer the main stress to the end of the construction. Churchward calls this "definitive stress":

- (20) e faiakó (definitive)  
ha faiáko (regular penultimate stress)  
e kau faifekáú (definitive)  
ha fanga púlu (regular penultimate stress)

Finally, definiteness of NPs can be marked by case particles. The case particle 'e marks the ergator (and precedes the article if any), while 'a marks the absolutive. (Churchward calls these "functional prepositions".)

- (21) na'e lea 'a Tolu 'Tolu spoke.'  
 PA speak ABS Tolu  
kuó u ni 'a Siale 'I have called Charlie.'  
 PERF I call ABS Charlie  
na'e manatu'i ia 'e Tolu 'Tolu remembered him.'  
 PA remember him ERG Tolu  
na'e tāmata'i 'e Tēvita 'a  
Kōliate 'David killed Goliath'  
na'e tāmata'i 'a Kōliate 'Goliath was killed'

There are constructions which Churchward (1953:31, 76) refers to as "verbs with completely indefinite objects". In these, the verb is followed immediately by the object, which thus never takes an article, even the indefinite one, or plural signs or case particles. (Churchward does not mention pronouns, demonstratives, or numerals in this context, but none of his examples of "completely indefinite objects shows any of these.) Compare (22) with (23):

- (22) na'e inu 'a e kavá 'e Sione. 'John drank the kava'  
PA drink ABS ART kava ERG John
- (23) na'e inu kava 'a Sione. 'John drank kava'  
PA drink kava ABS John

As in Ulithian, but much less amply discussed by the descriptor, "some verbs, when thus followed by a completely indefinite object, assume a special form." (1953:76) Some further examples (1953:101):

- (24) okú ke fanga moa? 'Do you keep fowls?'  
PRES you feed fowl
- (25) ko 'ene 'alu 'o tō mānioke. 'He is going  
PPF his going of planting t. tapioca-planting'  
(Literally: it is his going and  
planting tapioca)

(PPF=presentive functional preposition, a constituent which need not detain us here.)

We see, then, that Tongan has constructions very like the Ulithian ones we looked at earlier, with stripped objects. However, according to Churchward, in Tongan the object nominal does fuse with the verb, forming a compound (1953:76):

In this construction the verb and its object, though generally written separately, are together equivalent to a compound word; indeed, they are virtually one word.

He states moreover (*ibid.*) that the verbs in these constructions are intransitive. This is manifested above, where the 'e of (22) becomes the 'a of (23).

If indeed the Tongan verb with totally indefinite object forms "virtually one word" we have here incorporation; at least it seems to me useful to extend the notion in this manner. Note in passing that Tongan is verb-initial and that the incorporated object, if that is what we are dealing with, follows the root (see Mardirussian 1975 and Miner 1982).

There is room for doubt, however, due to the fact that according to Churchward's own account of Tongan stress, a compound should in many cases be stressed differently from a sequence of words. Stress is generally penultimate, but a long vowel is stressed anywhere, and an ultimate long vowel takes stress away from a preceding short vowel (1953:4):

<u>móhe</u>	'sleep'
<u>haé'i</u>	'tear' (v.)
<u>fetu'úa</u>	'starry'

<u>kumā</u>	'rat'
<u>kotokó</u>	'cackle'
<u>mālólóhi</u>	'strong'
<u>ngāúe</u>	'work'
<u>'ûkúma</u>	'patient'
<u>mālóló</u>	'rest'
<u>kākā</u>	'cheat'

There are clear compounds, such as vâkapúna, 'airplane' from váka 'boat' and púna 'fly'. In such cases the rightmost accent is primary, the other(s) secondary (1953:6).

There are also polysyllabic affixes which behave like members of compounds, at least as far as stress is concerned, e.g., fâkatúpu 'cause to grow' from túpu 'grow' and causative prefix faka- (1953:253); túpu'ánga 'place where s.t. grows' with -anga, a locative suffix (1953:238).

Now it can be seen that (24), for instance, would differ in stress depending on whether it contains a compound or not:

<u>okú ke fānga mōa?</u>	(non-compound)
<u>okú ke fānga mōa?</u>	(compound)

(NB: the element ke is one of several enclitics that move the stress of a preceding word to its final syllable, accounting for okú above rather than the expected oku.) Unfortunately, Churchward does not write stress unless it falls on a final syllable (as in the case of okú ke in the above example), and he never indicates secondary stress. So we really do not know what the facts are, and the stress difference would be rather subtle in any event.

1.3 Other languages. Fijian, on the authority of Milner 1956: §§59-61, does not incorporate, though it does have stripped objects. The same is true, as far as I can tell, of Yapese (Jensen 1977: §5.4.6). That is, there is no evidence in the available descriptions that the nominals in question actually form any sort of compound with their verbs.

Ponapean, on the other hand (Rehy 1981:§5.2.4), provides especially clear evidence of incorporation rather than stripping, since this language (more heavily affixing than perhaps most Micronesian languages) allows suffixes to attach to the incorporated object:



<u>I kangehr winio</u>	'I have taken that medicine'
<u>I kangala winio</u>	'I took all of that medicine'
<u>I kengwinihēr</u>	'I have medicine-taken'
<u>I kengwinihla</u>	'I completed my medicine-taking'

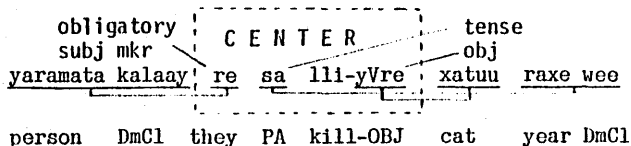
(wini 'medicine', kangwini 'take medicine', -ehr (perfective), -la (past), keng-/kang- 'take (as medicine)')

There remains only the claim regarding Turkish made by Mardirussian 1975, to wit, that it is incorporating. The claim has to do with the five possibilities the Turkish speaker has available in (pseudo-)transitive constructions:

<u>kitab okumak</u>	'to read book(s)'
<u>kitaplar okumak</u>	'to read books'
<u>bir kitap okumak</u>	'to read a book'
<u>kitabı okumak</u>	'to read a/the book'
<u>kitapları okumak</u>	'to read the books'

(kitab 'book', okumak 'to read', bir 'one', -lar (PL), -ı (DIR OBJ)) The construction kitab okumak, in which the semantic object lacks the objective case suffix, was taken by Mardirussian to show incorporation. At most, without evidence of compounding, it would be stripping, of course. However the fact that such objects can be pluralized (kitaplar okumak) renders this case wholly different from the ones we have seen previously.

**2.0 Conclusions.** Relatively analytic languages with what Longacre (1964:35-6) has called a "centering" type of clause structure do not seem so terribly different from relatively more synthetic ones. Languages like Tongan and Ulithian are good examples of "centering" languages; note the following example from Ulithian (adapted from Sohn & Bender 1973):



When lines are drawn, as above, between constituents which co-express grammatical categories like tense, person, case, location, etc., ends of lines are found to converge in one part of the string, its "center". The center can always stand alone, as in this case, one can say simply re sa lli-yVre 'killing took place by a plural agent'; with the adjuncts the full meaning is 'Those persons were killing cats last year.' The center exists because of the obligatory sub-

ject marker in these languages.

Note that if the center of a centering language were to become a single word, it would be equivalent to a polysynthetic verb. Compare the examples below from Quiché and Menomini:

	aspect	obj	subj	benefactive	STEM					
<u>manuel</u>	<u>k-eb-u-lu-k?an</u>			<u>lok ri</u>	<u>šila</u>	<u>čke</u>	<u>pa ri ha</u>	<u>čanim</u>		
Manuel	bring			hither	the chair	for	into the	at		
						them	house	ones		

				mode	STEM	obj(inan)	obj(an)	3p-3p	
<u>sāpatis</u>	<u>anenoh</u>	<u>metēmohsan</u>	<u>onākōw</u>	<u>kēs-wēht-</u>	<u>am-ow-ēw</u>	<u>eneh</u>	<u>ācemwan</u>		
John	that	woman	yesterday	PA	tell	that	story		

It may well be the case that, typologically, noun incorporation and object stripping represent the same tendency, but that in the case of a relatively synthetic language the result is incorporation, while in the case of a relatively analytic language the result is stripping. Chronologically, if a relatively analytic language having stripped objects were to change in the direction of greater synthesis, this should involve a move toward incorporation.

Or, it may be that stripping is chronologically prior to incorporation even for relatively synthetic languages. What we need is to find a language (if there are such) employing, rather productively, both stripping and incorporation, and look for evidence regarding which is the earlier development. If there are no such languages, then perhaps we do have, as suggested above, typological equivalence.

Finally, we began by noting (in passing) that in the Onondaga example of incorporation, when incorporation takes place the nominal involved often leaves phonological material behind. Putting it in a different way, where nominals have incorporated vs. non-incorporated forms which differ in phonological shape, the non-incorporated form has an increment or increments (in the Onondaga example, o- -?). This is very common. The data from Oceanic we have looked at suggest where to look for the historical sources of these increments: definitizers.

## REFERENCES

- Booker, Karen. 1981. Incorporation in Muskogean. *Kansas Working Papers in Linguistics* 6.55-69.
- Churchward, C. Maxwell. 1953. *Tongan Grammar*. London: Oxford University Press.
- Comrie, Bernard. 1981. *The Languages of the Soviet Union*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Jensen, John Thayer. 1977. *Yapese Reference Grammar*. Honolulu: The University Press of Hawaii.
- Longacre, Robert E. 1964. *Grammar Discovery Procedures*. The Hague: Mouton.
- Marchand, H. 1969. *The Categories and Types of Present-Day English Word Formation*. Second edition. Munich: C. H. Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung.
- Mardirussian, Galust. 1975. Noun incorporation in universal grammar. *Papers of the Eleventh Regional Meeting of the Chicago Linguistic Society* 383-389.
- Milner, G. B. 1956. *Fijian Grammar*. Suva, Fiji: Government Press.
- Miner, Kenneth L. 1981. Algonquian medials as incorporated nominals. Paper presented to the Annual Meeting of the American Anthropological Association, Los Angeles.
- 1982. A note on noun incorporation. *Algonquian and Iroquoian Linguistics* 7.36, 37.
- Rehy, Kenneth L. 1981. *Ponapean Reference Grammar*. Honolulu: The University Press of Hawaii.
- Selkirk, Elisabeth O. 1982. *The Syntax of Words*. Cambridge: The MIT Press. (Linguistic Inquiry Monograph 7).
- Sohn, Ho-Min, and B. W. Bender. 1973. *A Ulithian Grammar*. Canberra: The Australian National University (Pacific Linguistics Series C-27).
- Wolfart, H. Christoph, 1971. Plains Cree internal syntax and the problem of noun incorporation. *Proceedings of the Thirty-Eighth International Congress of Americanists* 3.511-518.
- Woodbury, Hanni. 1975a. *Noun Incorporation in Onondaga*. Yale University Ph.D. Dissertation.



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).

- Woodbury, Hanni. 1975b. Onondaga noun incorporation: some notes on the interdependence of syntax and semantics. IJAL 41.10-20.
- Zide, Arlene R. K. 1976. Nominal combining forms in Sora and Gorum. Phillip N. Jenner, Lawrence C. Thompson, and Stanley Starosta, eds., *Austroasiatic Studies, Part II (Oceanic Linguistics Special Publication No. 13)*. Honolulu: University Press of Hawaii.